29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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463 824 [283] stalks of millet, binding them together with ropes which he makes of grass. The same grass provides him with the thatch for the roof, mats for his door, ropes of varying strength to tether his goats and cattle, and a rope of great thickness and strength to assist him in the dangerous sport of hunting the hippopotamus. From reeds gathered by the riverside he weaves grain baskets and fish traps. If a cow of his falls sick he can act as a veterinary doctor, and if he fails 463 [232] to effect a cure for the animal, he is quite competent at least to cure its hide! He makes his own pottery, beautifully [323] symmetrical and balanced, without the aid of a wheel, and fires it in an earth oven, and grows the calabashes which [415] provide him with drinking bowls. He can turn his hand to [294] shoemaking, fashioning a clumsy but serviceable sandal from [237] hippopotamus hide and cow skin by using his spear blade very cleverly as both knife and awl. When his work is done he will fill his home-made pipe with tobacco he has grown and cured himself and gratefully drink the beer that his able wife has brewed for him. There are, naturally, some among them who are more gifted than others, or who show a special aptitude in some particular craft and therefore specialize in it. Thus, a Shilluk householder who wishes to have a superior type of thatching on his house will call in an expert to do it; yet such experts are comparatively few, because they are unnecessary in a community where each one is brought up to do everything for himself, and has no other work to prevent him from living a communal tribal life in full. The one craft that is completely exercised by a special few is that [326] of the blacksmith, and this because ironwork is so small a need in the life of the Shilluk. It is true that his two spears [411] and the small hoe he uses for cultivation are indispensable [412] to him, but once he acquires them they last a lifetime, and it would be a waste for him to collect the—to him—elaborate and expensive tools of the blacksmith's trade for which he would seldom, or never, have use. If ever he [437] needs a new spear or hoe he will, by buying or bartering, obtain it from the local smith, or—as is more likely in [439] these modern days—make his way to the nearest Arab